

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 927
By Cooper B

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Reverend Elizabeth Toles for her laudable service to the good people of Memphis and the State of Tennessee.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should salute those citizens who through their extraordinary efforts have distinguished themselves as community and spiritual leaders of whom we can all be proud; and

WHEREAS, one such noteworthy person is the Reverend Elizabeth Toles, who, even at the age of 81, has not ceased in her tireless efforts to serve her community and the good people of Memphis; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Toles has overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles in her life, including being orphaned at three months of age and suffering childhood blindness until her sight returned in one eye at the age of nine, but despite these setbacks, she has maintained a positive outlook, which she sums up as a "you can make it if you try" attitude; and

WHEREAS, not content to keep this positive energy to herself, she has taught this "can-do" attitude to countless youngsters as a school teacher, mentor, and pastor; and

WHEREAS, she taught in the Memphis City Schools for more than 32 years, educating numerous youths, who, thanks to the teaching and guidance of Reverend Elizabeth Toles, now serve as community and professional leaders; and

WHEREAS, deeply respected by her colleagues and supervisors, Reverend Toles possessed an uncanny ability to determine the strengths and weaknesses of her students in order to motivate and teach them in a way to best help them develop as scholars and citizens; and

WHEREAS, based on her dedication to her students and her outstanding teaching record, Reverend Toles was named the 1974 "Outstanding Elementary Teacher of America"; and

WHEREAS, after retiring from teaching in 1985, Reverend Elizabeth Toles founded the Church of Good Fellowship, which is a tithing church that donates ten percent of its monthly funding to its college students for their tuition and one percent of its monthly intake to Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association to help feed the hungry; and

WHEREAS, her desire to help the youth of the Memphis community continues through her church ministry, including Young Peoples' Speak Out evenings and weekly counseling sessions at her home; and

WHEREAS, inspired by Reverend Toles' messages about the value of hard work, all ten of the students from her congregation who have attended college have also graduated; many members of her church call Reverend Toles their "godmother"; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Elizabeth Toles is also known for her generous donation of time and talent to assist the community in its areas of greatest need; and

WHEREAS, one notable example of her impact on the State of Tennessee dates to 1969, when at the height of racial tensions, Reverend Toles donated half a commercial building to use as a community service center; and

WHEREAS, a woman of many talents, responsibilities, and interests, Reverend Toles also serves on the Board of King's Daughters and Sons Home; sponsors an annual Thanksgiving dinner for senior citizens at her church; and speaks at the YWCA of Greater Memphis and the NETWORK event; she was an original Board Member of the Whitehaven Southwest Mental Health Center and the Oral Roberts "Give Me a Chance" ministry; and

WHEREAS, a prominent and influential figure in the Memphis community for decades, Reverend Elizabeth Toles was honored in March 2000 with a prestigious "Lifetime of Achievement" award from *Memphis Woman* magazine; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Toles has also garnered national and regional acclaim for her public service and special talents including the National Sojourner Truth Meritorious Service Award from the National Negro Business & Professional Women, the 1998 Tennessee

Governor's Outstanding Achievement Award, the Women of Achievement for Steadfastness in 2000, the 2000 Top Ladies of Distinction Award, and many other distinguished honors; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Elizabeth Toles epitomizes the spirit and commitment that are characteristic of a true Tennessean, and she serves as a role model for professional, personal, and spiritual excellence; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly finds it appropriate to pause in its deliberations to acknowledge and applaud Reverend Elizabeth Toles for her dedication to our State's youth and for her unwavering support of the Memphis community; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Reverend Elizabeth Toles for her honorable and meritorious service to the State of Tennessee and the good people of Memphis, salute her commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction, and extend to her our best wishes for every future success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.